

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

EO 11652: XGDS
TAGS: MASS SS MR MO
SUBJECT: US MILITARY SALES TO MOROCCO

1. SUMMARY: KING HASSAN INFORMED SAUNDERS THAT F-5 AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN WITHDRAWN FROM WESTERN SAHARA AND ARE BEING USED TO DEFEND IRON ORE RAILWAY FROM BASE IN MAURITANIA. HE EXPLAINED THAT COBRA/TOW SYSTEM WOULD BE DEPLOYED IN NORTHERN MOROCCO FOR PROTECTION AGAINST ALGERIAN TANKS. SAUNDERS TOLD HASSAN U.S. PREPARED TO APPROVE MOROCCAN USE OF F-5S TO DEFEND MAURITANIA BUT DID NOT WANT TO UPSET ANY POST-COUP DIPLOMACY AND WOULD NEED JOINT REQUEST. HASSAN SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP BY MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN EMBASSIES IN WASHINGTON. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING JULY 21 MEETING, ASSISTANT SECRETARY SAUNDERS OPENED DISCUSSION OF BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH STATEMENTS THAT THESE ARE SECURELY BASED IN SHARED INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK, AND SIMILAR STRATEGIC AND OTHER INTERESTS. HE NOTED U.S APPRECIATION FOR MOROCCAN ROLE IN SHABA WHILE REMINDING HASSAN OF U.S. DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS IN MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA, WHICH HAVE EFFECT OF LIMITING OPPORTUNITY FOR FUTURE ENHANCEMENT OF SOVIET

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INFLUENCE IN THESE AREAS.

3. TURNING TO SUBJECT OF ARMS SALES, SAUNDERS SET THOSE TO MOROCCO WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE HISTORY OF SUCH SALES THROUGHOUT POSTWAR PERIOD TO LARGE NUMBER OF PURCHASERS WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF BILATERAL AGREEMENTS. HE EXPLAINED THAT WITHIN LAST FIVE YEARS CONGRESS HAD PASSED

LEGISLATION WHICH MODIFIED PROCEDURE IN TWO IMPORTANT WAYS:

(A) CONGRESS FIRST MANDATED A CUTOFF WHEN THE TERMS OF SUCH AGREEMENTS WERE VIOLATED AND LATER ALTERED THIS REQUIREMENT, OBLIGING THE PRESIDENT INSTEAD TO REPORT TO CONGRESS WHENEVER IT APPEARED A VIOLATION MAY HAVE OCCURRED. HE CITED AS RECENT EXAMPLES OF SUCH NOTIFICATIONS THOSE WHICH ENSUED FROM ISRAELI MILITARY AID TO LEBANESE CHRISTIANS AND ISRAELI USE OF CLUSTERBOMBS. SAUNDERS ALSO MENTIONED THAT SAUDI ASSURANCES ON USE OF F-15 AIRCRAFT HAD BEEN AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN OBTAINING CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF MID-EAST ARMS PACKAGE. (B) CONGRESSIONAL CONCURRENCE IN MAJOR ARMS SALES IS NOW, RPT NOW, REQUIRED. THESE TWO PROVISIONS OF LAW TAKEN TOGETHER HAVE CREATED SIGNIFICANT CONGRESSIONAL ROLE IN MONITORING ADHERENCE TO AGREEMENTS AND IN TIEING FUTURE SALES TO PERFORMANCE UNDER AGREEMENTS.

4. FOCUSING ON ARMS SALES TO MOROCCO, SAUNDERS EXPLAINED TO KING THAT ALTHOUGH MOROCCO ENJOYS STRONG SUPPORT WITHIN CONGRESS, EVEN HIS COUNTRY'S SUPPORTERS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT MOROCCAN USE OF F-5 AIRCRAFT IN WESTERN SAHARA AND MAURITANIA ESPECIALLY WHILE STATUS OF SAHARA IS NOT RESOLVED IN EYES OF MOST COUNTRIES. HE SAID ADMINISTRATION HAD NOT FORMALLY NOTIFIED CONGRESS THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A VIOLATION OF THE BILATERAL ARMS ACCORD, BECAUSE OF UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES IN THIS CASE. US REALIZES MOROCCANS ARE ENGAGED IN A WAR AND US RECOGNIZES THAT GOM INTERPRETS BILATERAL AGREEMENT DIFFERENTLY. HOWEVER, TIME HAS ARRIVED WHEN THE CONGRESS SHOULD BE NOTIFIED, PARTICULARLY AS US IS
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PREPARED TO MOVE AHEAD WITH COBRA HELICOPTER AND OTHER NEW ARMS SALES, AND BECAUSE IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO HAVE ISSUE RESOLVED BEFORE KING'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON (SEPTTEL), WHEN BOTH PARTIES WOULD WANT TO BE LOOKING AHEAD RATHER THAN BACK.

5. WHEN SAUNDERS REQUESTED HASSAN'S GUIDANCE ON LANGUAGE WHICH MIGHT BE USED TO DESCRIBE TO CONGRESS GOM'S POSITION ON THIS ISSUE, KING REPLIED THAT F-5S NO LONGER ARE BEING USED IN THE SAHARA, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE BEING USED WITHIN MAURITANIA, BUT ONLY WITHIN MAURITANIA'S PRE-1976 BOUNDARIES. WITH RESPECT TO COBRA/TOW, THESE WOULD BE ASSIGNED TO NORTHERN MOROCCO FOR PROTECTION AGAINST ALGERIAN TANKS. IF US DID NOT WANT TO SUPPLY COBRAS, HE ADDED, HE COULD PROBABLY OBTAIN GAZELLE HELICOPTERS FROM FRENCH. MENTIONING PARENTHETICALLY THAT HE ALSO HAD WANTED TO OBTAIN THE REDEYE MISSILE FOR DEFENSE, HASSAN STATED THAT FOLE OF F-5S IS DEFENSIVE, I.E. TO PROTECT THE IRON ORE RAILROAD FROM THEIR BASE AT AIRPORT IN NOUAHDIBOUT. IN ANY CASE, HE COMMENTED, "THE F-5 CHAPTER IS ALMOST CLOSED" AS THE AIRCRAFT ARE WEARING OUT. HIS AIR FORCE, HE SAID, WOULD HAVE ENOUGH TO DO ABSORBING THE 75 MIRAGES HE HAS PURCHASED (KING HINTED THAT PILOT SHORTAGES RESULTING FROM F-1 ACQUISITION MAY HAVE BEEN REASON INTEREST IN OV110S HAD EVAPORATED).

6. CHARACTERIZING KING'S STATEMENTS ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE F-5S AS VERY HELPFUL, SAUNDERS SAID THE USE OF THE AIRCRAFT TO DEFEND MAURITANIA NEED NOT POSE A PROBLEM, AS THE US COULD AUTHORIZE THEIR EMPLOYMENT FOR THIS PURPOSE IF BOTH MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENTS SO REQUESTED. US WOULD REQUIRE REQUESTS FROM MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA BEFORE AMENDING THE US-MOROCCAN BILATERAL, BUT WOULD NOT WANT TO INTERFERE WITH ANY DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN SET IN MOTION BY THE RECENT COUP. THIS AMENDMENT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED VIA AN EXCHANGE OF NOTES. KING SUGGESTED MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIA EMBASSIES IN WASHINGTON COULD BE INSTRUCTED TO PRESENT JOINT REQUEST TO USG, AND SAUNDERS REPLIED HE THOUGHT THIS PROCEDURE WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE.

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7. COMMENT: KING'S STATEMENT RESOLVES QUESTION OF F-5S IN SAHARA. SAUNDERS REPEATED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF KING'S STATEMENT AT THREE DIFFERENT POINTS IN CONVERSATION TO ASSURE NO MISUNDERSTANDING. BECAUSE OF UNSETTLED SITUATION IN MAURITANIA, IT SEEMS TO US THAT WE SHOULD ALLOW SOME TIME TO PASS BEFORE TRYING TO PIN DOWN EXAMPLE OF NOTES ON USE OF PLANES IN MAURITANIA. MEANWHILE, WE HAVE KING'S STATEMENT THAT HE IS PREPARED TO MAKE A JOINT REQUEST AND TO WORK IT OUT WITH MAURITANIANS THROUGH THE TWO EMBASSIES IN WASHINGTON. SAUNDERS WILL DISCUSS ON RETURN TO WASHINGTON ANY POSSIBLE COMMUNICATION WITH CONGRESS ON THIS ISSUE.

ANDERSON

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